



News Release

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Don't let ticks bug you this spring — stay healthy by avoiding animal diseases

OLYMPIA — Cleaning out the garage, walking through a grassy meadow, or handling chicks and ducklings can make you sick. They're common things people do during spring and summer, but they can be hazardous to your health.

Ticks may go hiking with you when you're walking through wooded or brushy areas and along grassy meadows. These are places where ticks can grab onto you. Some ticks can cause diseases like Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Hikers, campers, and people spending time outdoors in tick areas should wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants so it's easier to spot a tick and prevent it from getting to your skin. Always check family and friends' clothing and skin to see if any ticks have attached. Look carefully in and around the hair, ears, under arms, between legs, and back of knees. Repellents with DEET or permethrin are best; follow label instructions closely, particularly for children.

More [information on ticks](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WATickDiseases.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WATickDiseases.htm), diseases they can cause, and how to remove them is on the state Department of Health's Web site.

Spring cleaning can stir up the wrong kind of dirt. Deer mice live all over Washington. They can shed a virus in their urine, droppings, and saliva. If this virus is stirred into the air and breathed in, it can cause a rare, potentially fatal respiratory disease called hantavirus pulmonary syndrome. As of March 2009 there've been 37 reported cases in our state and 13 deaths. Early symptoms include fever, muscle aches, and extreme fatigue. As the disease worsens, it causes shortness of breath due to fluid-filled lungs, almost always requiring hospital care. It's a serious infection with no specific treatment or cure.

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Prevent hantavirus infection by following these guidelines:

- Don't sweep, brush, or vacuum rodent droppings or nests – this can stir up dust and increase the chance of inhaling the virus, if it's present.
- Soak or spray rodent contaminated areas with a bleach/water mixture (one part bleach to nine parts water) or other disinfectant.
- Clean up the contaminated rodent area with disposable towels, rags, or mops. Be sure to wear rubber gloves. Put contaminated materials into a plastic bag, seal it, and throw it away.

More information about [hantavirus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/hanta.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/factsheet/hanta.htm) is on the state health department's Web site.

Handling chicks, ducklings, and other young birds can be risky. These animals can carry *Salmonella*, which can cause severe diarrhea. Children are more likely to get sick because they're less likely to wash their hands, their immune systems aren't fully developed, and they have more hand-to-mouth contact than adults. A few simple steps can prevent the spread of *Salmonella* infection — always wash your hands after handling these animals, don't allow children under five to touch chicks and ducklings, and don't give a child a young bird as a gift.

Information on [Salmonella](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/salmonellachick.html) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/salmonellachick.html) is on the agency's Web site.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for a healthy dose of information.
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